

"I am setting a
plumb line in the
midst of my people..."

Amos 7:8



WITNESS

Oregon-Idaho Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

February 1, 2021

Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.

— Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

There are so many voices clamoring for our attention, telling us what we should do or think or believe; so much turmoil and chaos in our world. It's hard to know how to sort it all out and how to keep moving forward. What do we do next? What do we do first? Where do we turn for support and ideas and hope?



I want to suggest that one of the places we turn is to the scriptures. Our church's weekday, online devotion has been exploring Deuteronomy on Thursday mornings. There's a lot to wade through in Deuteronomy. God is trying to help a people that need organization and discipline and hope; people that need to know what God requires of them and how to live together in community. In Deuteronomy 30, starting at verse 15, we read these words of instructions:

*Look here! Today I've set before you life and what's good versus death and what's wrong. ¹⁶ If you obey the Lord your God's commandments that I'm commanding you right now by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments, his regulations, and his case laws, then you will live and thrive, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and so are misled, worshipping other gods and serving them, ¹⁸ I'm telling you right now that you will definitely die... Now **choose life**—so that you and your descendants will live— ²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying his voice, and by clinging to him. That's how you will survive and live long...*

What does it mean for us to choose life in today's world? How do we choose life? Jesus teaches us what it means to choose life: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37) Clear instructions, and difficult instructions. Jesus teaches us that community is most important – not just our tiny little communities that we have created; all of creation, all people, no matter who they are.

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NOW'S THE TIME FOR ACTION

Do our actions include all people, or do we leave out some? When we think our actions are doing good, is that good from our own perspective, or does it take into account how it impacts other people? We are so often quick to want to fix a problem or we feel overwhelmed by a problem and become too paralyzed to figure out any action to take.

What if we stop and ask ourselves what opportunities are before us; what small steps can we take toward choosing life, loving God, and loving our neighbor?

John Wesley, Methodism’s founder reminds us to “do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God.” I believe we need to look at all three of these instructions whenever we choose to take an action. We also need to ask ourselves for whom are we doing good and is that good causing harm to another?

Our MFSA chapter had a board meeting recently and decided to begin gathering ideas of actions we can take and invite you to take with us. In about a month, we plan to start posting one action every week. Our goal is to offer ideas for actions that allow us to do good while doing no harm to others. We hope you will join us in these actions and begin to think of your own actions that you can take. God asks us to choose life. Will you? What will that look like for you?

Working Together for Justice,
Karen Nelson

Dates to Remember

February 24, 6:00-8:00pm PST/7:00-9:00pm MT:
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Executive Board meeting, via ZOOM

March 24, 6:00-8:00pm PST/7:00-9:00pm MT:
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Executive Board meeting, via ZOOM

April 27: Newsletter submission Deadline



www.oimfsa.org
oregonidaho@mfsaweb.org



YOU ARE INVITED to any of our regular MFSA Board meetings!

We are meeting virtually every month, on the 4th Wednesday, from 6:00pm–8:00pm PT/7:00pm–8:00pm MT.

These meetings sometimes begin with a short program on topics relating to social justice. If YOU or your group has an idea for a future program you would like to share, please let us know!

The next scheduled meeting is:

February 24 via ZOOM

If you want to join us, please contact Karen Nelson for the ZOOM link.

NEWS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION

WORKING TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

Steve Mitchell

Many, if not most, of us can agree that too many people are being injured and killed by guns. The problem has only increased across the nation in this year of tension filled with racial justice protests and pandemic restrictions. At the same time, there are strong feelings and opinions about the Second Amendment of our country’s Constitution and the right of citizens to bear arms.

How can we, as Christians and justice-seekers, open conversations about this issue? What are the facts, and what actions can concerned citizens take? How can we motivate our state legislators and Congresspersons to take appropriate action to reduce unwanted injuries and death? Just what kind of firearms is it reasonable for responsible citizens to possess?

To aide in this conversation, Oregon-Idaho's Methodist Federation for Social Action has gathered resources, web links, and readings on gun violence – its sources, its impact, and its story.

You can use these resources on the [Oregon-Idaho MFSA website](#) to help you learn more and take action on this issue. There are:

- [links to groups](#) who can help you learn more and join with others in taking action;
- [suggested books](#) for reading and study;
- [links to statistics](#) of actual gun violence listed by state and for the nation at large; and,
- resources on [United Methodist positions](#) and beliefs on gun violence.

In addition to your own learning, these resources can be used to support an online discussion, sermon preparation, or book club group at your local church. Check for additional resources as we become aware of them and add them to the site.

The Oregon-Idaho MFSA leadership team will continue updating [resources](#) relating to racial justice, immigration and gun violence for churches and small groups to access throughout 2021.

AN INVITATION FOR MFSA MEMBERSHIP, 2021

Louise Kienzle, Membership Secretary

The beginning of a new year is the time to begin or renew your membership in MFSA. Since 1907, MFSA has been mobilizing clergy and laity to take action on issues of peace, poverty and people's rights within the church, the nation and the world. Becoming a member of MFSA means you will be joining other activists who care about issues of justice and peace and actively work to make a difference.

The destruction and violence of domestic terrorists on January 6 prove that we [in America] are not of one mind. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love our neighbors. We can and we must lead the way in the ongoing work of justice that God calls us to. In keeping with our Wesleyan heritage, we acknowledge our dependence on God's grace and guidance in all we do to establish personal and social holiness among all people and communities, advancing peace, justice, responsible human interaction and respect for the natural world.

If you have not yet renewed your membership to MFSA for 2021 or feel this is the time to start a new membership, there are two ways you can proceed:

- You can download the [OR-ID Chapter MFSA brochure](#), which includes the membership form, fill it out and mail it in as directed.
- Or, you can go to www.oimfsa.org and join on-line.

As a member of MFSA, you will receive an E-Newsletter with action alerts and resources, news from regional MFSA communities and members, and reviews of resources to put your faith into action. When you join/renew at the basic \$60.00 membership level, please consider adding a gift to our Chapter and National. MFSA is a 100% membership supported organization; contributions to MFSA are tax deductible.

If you feel called to be inclusive, justice-seeking, risk-taking, and wish to support and augment peace and justice ministries through and beyond The United Methodist Church, we invite you to join us in the work we continue to do. We will be stronger if we come together to promote the rights of all people.



OREGON-IDAHO CHAPTER FINANCIAL UPDATE

Jan Nelson

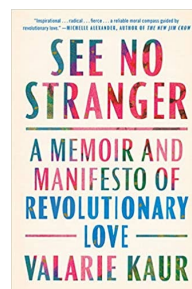
Thanks to your membership gifts and additional donations, we are able to meet the administrative expenses of our website, mailing, and electronic communication. Also in 2020, we were able to begin our work of antiracism with a video and discussion and also support the national organization's racism audit. We hosted author Valarie Kaur as the guest speaker at our annual meeting. At the end of the year, we had no outstanding expenses but not a lot of money left.

Thank you for your support of our justice seeking work. I hope you will continue that support by renewing your membership or joining with a contribution for the first time. Together, we can do more, even in a time of physical distancing.

SEE NO STRANGER BOOKS AVAILABLE

Jan Nelson

You may have seen parts of the "The People's Inauguration: 10 Days to Activate Revolutionary Love". For each of ten days following January 20, activist and author Valarie Kaur is hosting a time of interviews and teaching. These are all available at <https://product.soundstrue.com/peoples-inauguration/broadcast-welcome/>



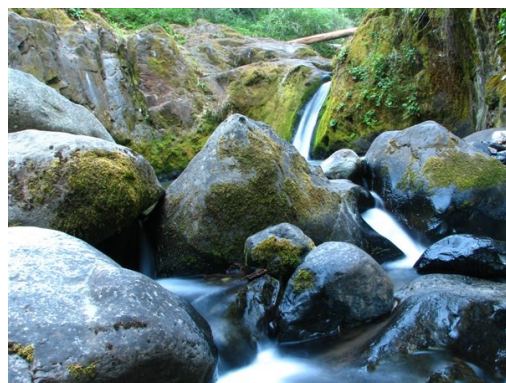
In the fall, we hosted Valarie Kaur at our annual meeting, just as her book *See No Stranger* was released. As a part of that, we arranged for a bulk purchase of copies of the book. It describes the same principles and practices as the *People's Inauguration* series. If you would like to purchase a copy of the book, we still have a few available at a great price of \$20. Contact Greg Nelson (greg@gknelson.net) to arrange to purchase a book and have it sent to you. If you live in the Salem area, you can contact Jan Nelson (jannelson515@msn.com) to get a copy.

RENAMING CELEBRATION

Rev. Todd Bartlett, Rev. Dr. Alice Knotts, Rev. Brenda Wills

"The subject is very painful for us. As tribal leaders, we maintain tribal unity. We do not want to take up this issue because it may be controversial. It brings up such deep old wounds, so much pain and anger, that we don't want to reopen old wounds and inflict more pain on our people. Neither do we want another argument or fight with other people. Our response to these proposals is not to comment. We will let the process happen. When a decision is made, if there is something to celebrate, we will celebrate and speak to the public. If there are individuals who wish to express their opinions, they are free to do that."

A representative from one of the federally recognized tribes with ceded lands in Southern Oregon.



Marjorie Falls at Camp Latgawa, named for Marge Knotts (Todd Bartlett).

In 1953, the Methodist Church of Oregon acquired the lease for a historic resort near Eagle Point, Oregon, named "Dead Indian Soda Springs Camp."

"On HOT summer days, the natural slide in the rocks by the soda springs at Camp Latgawa is a little slice of paradise. Ancient campers (my age and older) recall mixing the soda water with Kool-Aid! In 1981 the OR-ID Annual Conference changed the name from Dead Indian Soda Springs to Latgawa, as an act of respect for our Native American neighbors who stewarded this land for centuries." The persons leading that name change effort were Marge Knotts, Carol Colley, and Takelma Elder Agnes Baker Pilgrim.

Camp Latgawa was especially loved by Rev. Ross and Marge Knotts, and their children Joe and Alice. Rev. Dr. Alice was delighted to learn that the U. S. Board on Geographic Names approved her proposal to change the name Dead Indian to Latgawa in three places.

Latgawa is a word from the native language of the area, which means "those living in the uplands." Camp & Retreat Ministries adopted this word for our southern Oregon site nearly 40 years ago, recognizing the powerful and insidious role of place names in sustaining racism. But many geographic labels in that area continued to hold the traditional labels given by the White culture. Alice Knotts has continued to work to eradicate these names. Late last month, Alice received word that her work has finally born fruit in prompting name changes. She reports the following:

"Today I received official word from the U.S. Board on Geographic Names that they approved my three proposals to change the names of Dead Indian Creek, Dead Indian Mountain, and Dead Indian Soda Springs in Jackson County, Oregon, to Latgawa Creek, Latgawa Mountain and Latgawa Soda Springs.

"This approval comes about a month after the names Latgawa Pinnacles [these are the cliff-like features along the road shortly before you arrive at Camp Latgawa], Marjorie Falls [this is the natural waterslide that campers enjoy while at Camp Latgawa], and Hole-in-the-Rock were approved."

Thank you, Alice for your tireless work and commitment to justice.

OREGON ACLU—PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SEASON

Claudia Roberts

Oregon ACLU recently held a webinar on their priorities for the 2021 legislative session. I urge anyone who is interested to watch the recorded webinar, available on their website: [2021 Legislative Session Preview Webinar | ACLU of Oregon \(aclu-or.org\)](#). It is a fast-paced discussion about the five areas they have chosen to focus on this year along with suggestions to engage with our legislators on these issues. Listed here are the five areas they have selected. They will be having a legislative advocacy day in late April. We will post that info when it is available.

Five focus areas for 2021:

1. **Strengthening our democracy**—SB571 and HB2366 seek to restore voting rights for incarcerating residents. Current law prohibits voting by felony convicted prisoners who are serving their sentences. Rights are restored after they finish their sentences but it is felt that they should not lose their right to vote while incarcerated as they are still citizens of our state.
2. **Health and Wellness**—Focusing on creating equal access to health care and recognition that health care is a basic human right. HB2362 would strengthen the healthcare network around the state, especially in areas of the state where care choices are limited.
3. **Restorative Justice**—Measure 110 was passed in November that decriminalized many street drugs and defined addiction as a medical condition. They want to support funding an increase of treatment options and create a free and automatic way to expunge minor drug convictions.
4. **Public and Community Safety**—This is focused on two areas:
 - a. Strengthening our Safe Sanctuary law to prohibit county personnel from communicating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

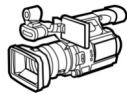
- b. Prohibit for profit detention centers in Oregon and allow for lawsuits to be filed if the Sanctuary law is violated.
5. **Consumer Privacy and Cyber Security**—Focus on giving the Department of Justice more power to charge perpetrators of cyber invasion, ransom demands and hacking. Also focused on protecting personal data collected in the contact tracing programs.

Check their website if you want more information about these issues. [ACLU of Oregon \(aclu-or.org\)](http://www.aclu-or.org)

RESOURCES



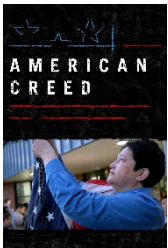
BOOKS,



VIDEOS, MOVIES...

*Sometimes one stumbles across a book, article, video or movie and thinks:
"my social justice friends need to read/see this!"*

Below are a few titles that members of the MFSA Executive Committee have seen, been reading, or used as a group study – please share your suggestions with newsletter editor Louise Kienzle at kienzle.louise@gmail.com for a future edition.

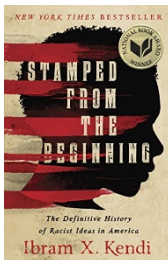


"American Creed", documentary (submitted by Greg Nelson)

The documentary film "American Creed" offers a thoughtful view on society and race. In the film, two Stanford University professors, political scientist and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Historian David M. Kennedy, along with a group of Stanford students, explore the many aspects of being "American" and how that differs across race, income, and culture. Through exploration of the lives and histories of themselves and their students they explore what it means to be a "citizen" in American and what pulls people to be part of "the American Dream."

While it does not offer answers to the many dilemmas' society faces today; it does provide an entertaining look at how we can look at different perspectives, understand the history that has formed our options and world view, and model ways of listening and understanding to positions of other people.

Learn more and view the film at www.americancreed.org. It is eighty-six minutes long, and well worth the time.



Stamped from the Beginning by Ibram X. Kendi (submitted by Jan Nelson)

This book by the author of *How to be an Antiracist* is a thorough history of racist and antiracist ideas in America. These ideas have existed together since the first Europeans brought them here. The nation's history is marked by periods of racial progress and racist progress. The stories are extremely well documented. His style is quite readable, although at times it seemed a little repetitive in the interest of specificity and accuracy. First published in 2016, the book tracks history through the presidency of Barack Obama to the rise of Donald Trump. It is a lot of pages, but well worth the time. I read about some things I already knew, but I learned a lot that was new to me and important.

Kendi discounts the idea that American history is a slow but sure march toward equality, but he ends on a hopeful note. "There will come a time when Americans will realize that the only thing wrong with Black people is that they think something is wrong with Black people... There will come a time when we will love humanity, when we will gain the courage to fight for an equitable society for our beloved humanity, knowing, intelligently, that when we fight for humanity, we are fighting for ourselves. There will come a time. Maybe, just maybe, that time is now."

NOW'S THE TIME FOR ACTION

Now is the time to continue to push for broad systemic change. Here are a few ways you can take action to seek justice:

- ❑ You can help! On July 4, 2020, David G. Lewis, PhD (Takelma, Santiam, Chinook) and Jolene Bettles (Klamath, Nez Perce, Chugach, Wasco, Aleut) initiated a **petition** to Commissioners of Jackson County, Oregon, asking **for a name change**. Reading the petition gives helpful information. Non-native allies as well as Native people are invited to [sign the petition](#).
- ❑ The [Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice](#) (IMiRJ) will host **IMiRJ Advocacy Nights** on the 2nd Monday of each month from 6:00-7:30pm, starting Monday, February 8th. [RSVP here](#) and invite your friends to join you! We also invite you to [add your name to this letter to our Oregon State Legislators](#), as we urge them to practice accountability, defend democracy and advance justice alongside us this season.
- ❑ Deaconess Cindy Andrade Johnson joins **refugees at migrant camps** in filling out 1000 to 2000 postcards directed to Dr. Jill Biden, Vice President Biden, and Senator Harris to remember them and change the inhuman policy of MPP, the Migrant Protection Protocol. See a sample to [write a letter and join the grassroots organizing for the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants](#).
- ❑ President Biden can end the practice of family detention, while also rolling back restrictions on migration. We need you to help us send this message to the White House. [Act now](#), email President Biden now and ask him to end family detention once and for all.
- ❑ Right now, Congress is negotiating the next COVID relief package. And we NEED to make sure our undocumented communities are included. So, we have a plan to make this happen ... [United We Dream is launching a calling campaign to demand that a pathway to citizenship for our immigrant communities is included in the next COVID Relief Package. Make a call now to 213-335-2335!](#)
- ❑ Manufacturing in an illegal Israeli settlement is a war crime. Tell General Mills to stop making Pillsbury products on stolen Palestinian land by [signing the petition](#), [sending an email to the CEO](#), and [#BoycottPillsbury](#).
- ❑ Join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and students around the U.S. and [send an email to major U.S. food delivery services to "stop doing business with Wendy's"](#) until the hamburger giant ensures enforceable protections for farmworkers' human rights by joining the Fair Food Program."
- ❑ Learn how you and your ministry can truly embody open hospitality by [enrolling in Be A Disciple's courses and getting a Certification in Ministry with People with Disabilities](#).
- ❑ Check out the [BDS Toolkit](#) and learn what economic actions you can take to fight along the side of Palestinians and their struggle.
- ❑ The pandemic marginalizes those already most marginalized in society. [Host a virtual Card Writing Party](#) to write and mail **letters to immigrants** in detention via [The Casa Mariposa Detention Visitation Program](#).
- ❑ Call your Senators and demand Congress provide support and [Covid relief for the US Postal Service](#).
- ❑ [Sign the petition](#) and join [Palestinian Cry for Hope: a Call to Decisive Action](#), a global movement set by **Kairos Response** that "rouses churches to action and awakens civil society to the reality of Palestinian suffering."
- ❑ Grow in your personal learning or as a community with a **group study** by taking advantage of [free online university courses on systemic racism](#).
- ❑ Call your legislators (202-224-3121) and **advocate** for permanent federal paid sick leave, expanded unemployment benefits, SNAP increases, and a moratorium on evictions, utility shut-offs, and payments.
- ❑ So much of this country is in an economic free-fall in **response to COVID-19** while many Americans were already at rock bottom before the virus hit. Use your voice and [sign the petition calling on Congress for a moral response to COVID-19](#). The current legislation doesn't do enough to address the extent of the crisis (universal health care, living wages, worker protection, adequate income, and anti-poverty programs to name a few).
- ❑ **Sign the petition: Demand state and federal lawmakers end the use of private prisons and protect incarcerated people from COVID-19.**
- ❑ Find **other actions, acts of gratitude and more** at [Americans of Conscience](#).

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OREGON-IDAHO MFSA ON THE WEB

For information about MFSA and our chapter, current news, resources and more, go to www.oimfsa.org.

Contact Oregon-Idaho Chapter MFSA, at oregonidaho@mfsaweb.org or P.O. Box 134, Salem OR 97308.

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